programme of cooperation between India and Russia in S and T, is implementing four joint projects in the area of plant bio-technology. An Indo-Russian centre for bio-technology has been set up at Indian Institute of Information Technology, Allahabad for networking and developing joint projects in the area of agriculture bio-technology and medical bio-technology. So far, broad areas of cooperation related to development of vaccines and diagnostics of relevance to both countries have been identified. An oral polio vaccine formulation plant namely "Bharat Immunologicals and Biologicals Cooperation Ltd." has been set up at Bulandshahar with Russian cooperation. Russia is one of the principal suppliers of bulk vaccine for the plant.

Immunization programme for Hepatitis

2934. SHRI K. M. KHAN: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any plan to launch nation-wide immunization programme for prevention and eradication of Hepatitis for children in the age group 0--10 years;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) to (c) Government of India have decided to introduce Hepatitis B vaccine for infants under the Universal Immunisation Programme on a pilot basis. This programme will be implemented in slums areas of 15 metropolitan cities during 2002-03 and 32 districts during 2003-04. The pilot project is supported by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization.